

LEAD MINES.

LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF WAR,

TRANSMITTING

The information required by a resolution of the House of Representatives of the 2d inst.

IN RELATION TO THE

LEAD MINES OF THE UNITED STATES.

JANUARY 7, 1828.

Read, and referred to the Committee on the Public Lands.

WASHINGTON :

PRINTED BY GALES & SEATON.

1828.

HEAD MINES.

REPORT

OF THE

COMMISSIONERS OF THE LAND OFFICE
IN RESPONSE TO A RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE
PASSED MAY 15, 1846, RELATIVE TO THE
LANDS BELONGING TO THE UNITED STATES
WHICH ARE NOT IN THE POSSESSION OF THE
LAND OFFICE.

WASHINGTON:
GEO. W. WOODS, PRINTER.
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DEPARTMENT OF WAR,

January 4, 1828.

SIR: In obedience to a resolution of the House of Representatives, of the 2d instant, I have the honor of presenting the enclosed report, which contains all the information received by this Department on the subject of the Lead Mines, which has not been heretofore communicated.

I have the honor to be,

Your obedient servant,

JAMES BARBOUR.

The Hon. ANDREW STEVENSON,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

DEPARTMENT OF WAR

January 4, 1898.

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Your obedient servant,

JAMES BARBOUR

The Hon. Andrew Stevenson,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

ORDNANCE DEPARTMENT,

Washington, January 4, 1828.

SIR: In answer to the resolution of the House of Representatives, of the 2d instant, which has been referred to this Department, I have the honor to transmit to you, herewith, a copy of a report from the Superintendent of the United States' Lead Mines, (Lieut. M. Thomas,) of the 30th September last, containing all the information on the subject of the Lead Mines which has been received by this Department, and which has not been heretofore communicated.

I have the honor to be, sir,

Your most obedient servant,

G. BOMFORD, *Bt. Col.*

On Ordnance service.

HON. JAMES BARBOUR,

Secretary of War.

ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI,

September 30, 1827.

Col. GEORGE BOMFORD, on Ordnance service, Washington.

SIR: At this period, which closes the official year, it may be proper to accompany the quarterly returns now due, with some general remarks as to the present condition and future prospects of the public lead mines.

During the past year, it will be observed, from the returns, that the product of the mines under lease in Missouri has not increased. This is accounted for by the superior richness and extent of the mines on the upper Mississippi, which has attracted many of the regular miners from Missouri, and prevents, in a great measure, any increase of their number from emigrations: all being alike drawn to the upper mines, where a more profitable return for the labor of the miner is to be found. Very few late discoveries have, therefore, been made in Missouri; and the upper leads or floats of ore, having generally been dug out at the old mines, they have been required to sink deeper in order to obtain the mineral; and, consequently, more labor has been requisite to obtain the same quantity of lead than heretofore. In the course of these operations, the existence of veins of ore in the strata of rock, below the usual depth of mining in Missouri, is fully proven in several instances; and there is now no doubt that this is the case generally. Another reason why the product of the public mines in Missouri has not increased, is, the difficulty of preventing unauthorized

mining at the public mines, whether leased or not. They are so interspersed with private property, as almost to render it impracticable to detect an offender under the present system of leasing small quantities.

The amount of rent obtained from the Missouri mines, (91,038 pounds,) is, however, considerably more than sufficient to defray the whole expense attending the superintendence and management of all the public lead mines ; which leaves the large amount obtained on the upper Mississippi (518,218) clear revenue. The tabular statements will show a very great increase in the product of the mines on the upper Mississippi during the present year, and it is still progressing.

The average number of miners at the *upper* mines,

During the year 1825,	was	-	-	100
Do.	1826,	do	-	400
Do.	1827,	do	-	1,600

The amount of mineral obtained—

In 1825,	was	-	-	1,278,528 pounds
1826,	do	-	-	1,848,164 do
1827,	do	-	-	11,248,366 do

The amount of lead made—

In 1825,	was	-	-	664,530 do
1826,	do	-	-	958,842 do
1827,	do	-	-	5,182,180 do

Leaving on hand, at this date, mineral and *ashes* (or fine mineral) sufficient to make 2,116,000 pounds of lead more.

The value of the lead made in 1827, as above stated, is \$220,242 64, exclusive of the amount which will be obtained from the ore, &c. now unsmelted, which is \$ 85,493, making a total of \$ 305,735 64, one-tenth of which is paid, as a rent, to the United States. And there is no part of the public revenue, it is believed, more cheerfully paid, or more easily collected : for individuals are amassing fortunes at the mines, and do not consider it a hardship to pay for the privilege. The Government is also benefitted by a more extensive sale of the public lands now in the market, as very many of the miners and laborers are farmers from the States of Illinois and Missouri, who resort to the mines as a certain source from whence to obtain money ; much of which is expended in the purchase of land. In addition to which, the market for produce is very good at the mines, and large shipments take place from the towns on the upper Mississippi. St. Louis also enjoys a profitable trade in merchandise, transportation, &c. &c., from the increased business at the upper mines. From an examination of the mineral region on the east bank of the upper Mississippi, I am fully convinced of the richness of it. It extends at least one hundred miles from south to north, and from thirty to fifty east and west. Much of the soil is very fertile ; some parts of it exceedingly rich ; it lies high ; is well watered, containing fine springs, but is not well timbered in general ; there are districts of it, however, covered with groves of thriving timber well adapted to smelting the ore ; and the mines are of easy access to the Mississippi, where fuel is abundant.

I am anxious to introduce the European method of smelting lead ore, which I requested permission to do in my last annual report. The saving in fuel, and superior product, would very shortly repay the expense of erecting and placing the furnace in operation.

In my last annual report, I drew the attention of the Department to the clearing out of a boat channel in the rapids of the upper Mississippi. There has recently been adopted a method of navigating the river, including the rapids, by steamboats of light draft, with powerful engines, and towing *two* keel boats, each of forty tons; which will no doubt fully succeed, if the rapids are improved as suggested, and the intercourse with the mines and military posts on the upper Mississippi will be much facilitated. The importance of a safe and rapid communication with the military posts is sufficiently evident. Had the recent attack of the Indians upon the boats transporting provisions to Fort Snelling, taken place whilst on their way *up* the river, they would have inevitably fallen into the hands of the Indians, and a general massacre taken place. I would, therefore, respectfully urge an examination to be made of these rapids at the proper time, with a view to improving the channel.

The subject of running the north boundary line of the State of Illinois, has heretofore been brought to view in my reports. The upper mines are in the vicinity of that boundary, whether in the State or not, is at present uncertain. It is a matter of importance to ascertain the fact, which it appears has been taken for granted, as a county has been organized at the mines, by the State of Illinois. Connected with this subject, is the boundary between the lands of the Chippewas, Ottawas, and Pottowattamas Indians, and those of the Winnebagoes. This boundary, as defined by the ninth article of the treaty of Prairie des Chiens, (of August, 1825,) will be found very difficult to ascertain; and should further negotiations take place with the Winnebagoes, it would be well to have the boundary altered, as "the small streams emptying into the Mississippi," the heads of which are partly the boundary in question, interlock with the tributaries of Rock river, which has its course in the Winnebago country. Another cause for desiring a change of the boundary in question, is, that, near the Winnebago village, mentioned in the ninth article of the treaty of August, 1825, there is a ford, in Rock river, at which the road from Peoria, principally travelled by emigrants from below, crosses that stream. At this village is a small predatory band of Indians, said to consist partly of Winnebagoes, and partly of outlaws from other tribes, who are exceedingly troublesome to travellers; and it would conduce much to the peace and safety of the miners and travellers, were the point of beginning the boundary removed from the village to a point higher up Rock river. The east boundary, as provided for in the ninth article of the treaty of 1825, before referred to, will be found difficult to ascertain; and if run, as now required, will, from its extreme sinuosity, be a constant source of dispute between the miners and Indians. Boundaries with the Indians should be plain, and not liable to be misunderstood; those in countries where agricul-

ture is the principal object of the inhabitants, are of much less importance: for here a very small quantity of land may contain great wealth, of easy access, and consequently presenting strong temptations to the stronger to infringe upon the rights of the weaker party, for the slightest pretext whatever. I am not fully acquainted with the locality of the country in which Rock river has its source; but, as the portage between the Fox river of Green Bay and the Ouisconsin, is a point of importance, it would seem that from them to Rock river, at some well-known point above the Winnebago village, so often referred to, and with that river to its mouth, would be a preferable boundary to the present one.

These suggestions may not come within my proper sphere of duty, but it will be kept in view that the increase of population at the mines has been beyond expectation, and there is no doubt of a still greater increase. It is, therefore, desirable, as far as possible, to obviate all chance of difficulties hereafter, both to enlarge the space for the operations of the miners, and to define it more distinctly, than at present.

The district in which the mines at present wrought are located belongs to the Chippewas, Ottowas, and Pottowattamas Indians, with the exception of the reservations provided for in the second article of the treaty of 1816. These reservations are about one-twenty-fifth part of the district as defined by the treaty of 1825. The reservations, being for mining purposes, they are necessarily made in detached parcels. This presents a difficulty, as respects the jurisdiction of Illinois or Michigan. The intermediate land, between the reservations, is still the property of the Indians; a purchase of which would seem to be the only way of removing the embarrassments produced by this state of things. It is not a game country, and the Indians to whom it belongs, in part, do not frequent it; and it is believed that their right to it could now be purchased on as good, if not on better terms, than at any future period.

There has been much misapprehension, and consequent misrepresentation, as respects the location of the reservations provided for in the treaty of 1816. The language of the proviso in the second article, is clear and explicit, viz.: "Provided, that such other tracts shall not, in the whole, exceed the quantity that would be contained in five leagues square," and admits of but one construction. It should be borne in mind, that it was a cession to the Ottowas, Chippewas, and Pottawatamas, of land which the United States had purchased from the Sacs and Fox Indians; and that the United States had a perfect right to define the terms on which the cession should be made. The recollection of this fact will, doubtless, relieve the morbid sensibility of those persons who have lamented the supposed imposition upon the Indians from the Government's locating the reservations, for mining purposes, in detached parcels, and upon the richest spots. As the leasing of the public lead mines is considered never to have been the permanent policy of the Government, and as the prevention of a monopoly of the mines, by capitalists, or others, was a principal object when reserving them from sale, I would suggest that the at-

tainment of it is now within the reach of the Government. The discovery of such rich and extensive mines on the upper Mississippi, admits of a commencement of the sale of the public mines in Missouri: for, if those mines are now brought into market, and those on the Mississippi reserved for some years longer, they will naturally fall into the hands of many persons, and no monopoly can be effected. The mineral lands in Missouri are all surveyed, and can be brought into market at any time, by advertising those which have not before been in market. After the public sales, the land remaining unsold might then be disposed of, as other lands are. Those which are leased, should be sold subject to the lease. But whether the mineral lands are sold or not, it is requisite that some further provision should be made to prevent trespassing upon them, which is daily lessening their value. The laws on the subject may now be sufficient for the public lands generally; but it is thought some better provision could be made for the protection of the mineral lands. It is not to be expected that all the mineral lands would meet with purchasers immediately, and, until they do, they should be protected from trespassers. The whole district is a mineral one, and the restrictions upon the completion of titles of various kinds, merely because the land contains mineral, should be removed. These restrictions appear to have been imposed from the supposition that but a limited number of mines were in the country, and that the claimants under Spanish and French grants, &c., would seek to monopolise the mines. This, with some exceptions, has not been the case. The object of most of the inhabitants was to secure the best land for cultivation, as, during the period the country belonged to Spain, no restrictions as to mining on the King's domain existed. The several acts of Congress upon the subject prevent the completion of titles when the land contains lead ore; and the laws of Missouri do not afford protection against trespassers upon land held under incipient titles. The United States permit the claimant to occupy the land, and consequently do not interfere when trespassing takes place; the claimant being debarred the right to recover damages, has the mortification to behold the property, to which he has an equitable and just title, daily depredated upon by persons who have not, *nor do not pretend to have*, the shadow of a claim to it. This state of things is detrimental, in many respects: at many of the mines the loss is considerable, and the trespassers keep forcible possession. It may readily be supposed, that a population of the worst kind will naturally be drawn to the mines thus situated, which, by a character for violence, is calculated to check the emigration to the mine country of the better and more useful sort.

The subject of making a road from Potosi to the river Mississippi, a distance of only thirty miles, has been brought to view in my reports for two years past. The amount of one or two years' rent of the mines in Missouri, will be amply sufficient for the effectuation of this object; and I would earnestly repeat the recommendation. It will no doubt enhance the value of the public lands far more than the cost

of the operation, and might be embraced in the same act which provides for the examination of the rapids of the Mississippi, should that proposition meet with a favorable reception.

I remain, Sir, respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

M. THOMAS,

Lt. U. S. Army, Supt. U. S. Lead Mines.